



EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

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January 31, 2000

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2000-016

Executive Council votes not to use hotel in chain accused of racial discrimination

by James Solheim

(ENS) On the day that much of the nation was celebrating the birthday of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church voted unanimously not to use the Denver hotel of a chain accused by the Justice Department of a broad pattern of racial discrimination as headquarters for next summer's General Convention.

"The church had intended to hold many of its hearings, meetings and events in the Adam's Mark hotel facilities and had also reserved a large block of guestrooms at that hotel," said the January 17, statement signed by Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold and Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies (*text in News Features*)

"We were disturbed to learn just prior to Christmas that the United States Department of Justice had filed suit against the hotel chain in federal court in Florida alleging a broad pattern of racial discrimination in providing a variety of guest services," the statement said. "Subsequent discussion with hotel officials both in Denver and corporate headquarters in St. Louis, coupled with reports by diocese of Colorado representatives of discussions with local community and church leaders in Denver, failed to allay our concerns."

The statement said that the church was not in a position "to assess the merit of the discrimination suit against the hotel chain," but said that the allegations, coupled with "other reports from local leaders citing similar problems with the Adam's Mark in Denver, led us to recommend to the council that the church not go forward with the planned arrangements to use any of the facilities of that hotel."

The action was "the most appropriate response," especially in light of the church's "profound commitment to eradicating racism in our church and society," the statement concluded.

Church leadership was disturbed not only by the announcement of the suit but also by a December 17 *Washington Post* article alleging that the Justice Department had conducted an investigation that revealed black guests were overcharged, turned away or segregated into inferior rooms, which prompted the unusual step of filing suit. Further, the article quoted Attorney General Janet Reno as saying, "More than 30 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the sad fact is that some Americans are still treated differently because of their race."

Early conversations revealed a strong sentiment that the church should not use the hotel but participants urged wide consultation with church and community leaders.

Griswold set up a conference call with 19 church leaders on January 12 to discuss the issues. After hearing staff reports, the Rev. Robert Franken of the Diocese of Colorado said that he had spoken with the Denver mayor's office, the Urban League, the NAACP and many local church leaders. While there was a range of opinion, with some suggesting that it may be possible to negotiate some promises of change, the consensus was not to use the hotel. Several suggested that the church really had no choice, that it was crucial that the church make a witness, maintaining its moral integrity even at the risk of some financial loss.

Bishop Barbara Harris of Massachusetts reminded those participating in the conference call that in 1955 the church had moved a whole General Convention, from Houston to Hawaii, over the racial issue. "It can be done and it should be done," she said in arguing against using the hotel.

When asked about the logistical implications of a move, the Rev. Rosemari Sullivan, executive officer of the General Convention, said that there would be complications in the loss of nearly a thousand rooms and meeting space at the hotel. "But the move can be done. We will find a way to make it happen." In light of the council recommendation, her staff must now scramble to find alternatives.

Hotel officials refused to discuss the financial implications of the decision but did tell the Denver Post that the contract signed by the church calls for a cancellation penalty of \$1.2 million.

--James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-018

Executive Council sifts through variety of concerns, votes against using Denver hotel

by James Solheim

(ENS) The Episcopal Church's Executive Council met in New Orleans January 17-20, sifting through a variety of concerns over this summer's General Convention, deciding not to use a Denver hotel that is part of a chain accused of a broad pattern of racial discrimination.

The issue of whether or not to use the Adam's Mark Hotel in Denver as the headquarters for the July 4-14 General Convention was on the agenda of the planning and arrangements committee, meeting in New Orleans before Executive Council. After what was described by the Rev. Barnum McCarty of Florida, chair of the committee, as an "in-depth discussion" of the issue, the committee recommended to the presiding officers that the church not use the hotel.

In an ironic twist, the council's unanimous vote came on the day much of the country was celebrating the birthday of slain civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr. A January 17, statement by Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold and Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, said that the allegations in the Justice Department suit, coupled with "other reports from local leaders citing similar problems with the Adams Mark in Denver," led to the decision. The statement (*text in News Features*) said that the action was "the most appropriate response," especially in light of the church's "profound commitment to eradicating racism in our church and society."

Bishop Frank Turner of Pennsylvania said that the process of reaching a decision was better than the one used to decide to go to Phoenix in 1991, even though Arizona did not celebrate King's birthday. "We feel good about the process," he said. "It was a tough decision but the right one." Griswold commended the council for the "graciousness" of the discussion, adding that it represented a "wonderful quality of care and thoughtfulness."

Griswold reports on encounters

In his opening remarks to the council, Griswold described his travels and encounters since the last meeting. He said that he was "extremely sad" with the isolation the Diocese in Colombia is suffering because decades of civil war has meant that it has not had a companion relationship with another diocese for over 20 years. His plans to visit a housing project where

the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief is helping to rebuild houses after an earthquake had to be cancelled because it was in a rebel-held zone.

Griswold said that a meeting called by the archbishop of Canterbury in response to a 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution urging dialogue on the divisive issue of homosexuality was "an extremely rich and positive exchange." Participants at the retreat center in New York were able to lay out the different points of view and then identify gray areas, helping them to explore subtleties, according to Griswold. After engaging in conversation beyond their stated positions, participants unanimously agreed that the dialogue should continue.

The presiding bishop also met with the pope at the Vatican to discuss the future of the official international dialogue between Roman Catholics and Anglicans, a commission which Griswold co-chairs. And he participated in the dedication of the new Anglican Centre in Rome.

He participated in a retreat with a small group of denominational church leaders at the College of Preachers in Washington where there was considerable conversation about the future of the National Council of Churches (NCC). "In one sense the NCC has died and there needs to be a resurrection," he said, adding that there can't be a resurrection until people "recognize that there has been a death."

The task of reconciliation

In her comments to the council, Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, reflected on reconciliation. For example, her Council of Advice and the presiding bishop's council met "to consider issues most likely to be contentious when we get to Denver this summer, and identify approaches for encouraging respectful dialogue and creating connections between those holding conflicting positions seeking reconciliation within our own church body."

At a meeting of the U.S. churches that are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Atlanta, "the whole theme was reconciliation," including a sermon by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Ebenezer Baptist Church from the pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr. She also reported on the warning by Prof. Miraslov Volf of Yale Divinity School against "cheap reconciliation," false ways of seeking to resolve the tensions between justice and peace.

Chinnis also held out the possibility that "through the miracle of modern telecommunication the majority of deputies and bishops can participate in conversation, exchange of information, testing ideas, sharing views, debating positions through e-mail" months before General Convention. Only 19 percent of deputies at the last convention used the potential but that has quadrupled to over 72 percent now. "The 2000 Convention will be the first to benefit from the kind of preparation afforded by this non-geographic conversation," she said.

While telecommunication "can be an instrument of unity and reconciliation," it also has the potential to "heighten our tendency toward division," she observed. "It's not a level playing field yet and may never be."

Budget process refined

Treasurer Steve Duggan took council members through the budget that will be presented at this summer's General Convention, pointing out "how the numbers have changed and how that represents a change in emphasis" in the church's mission. In showing the income in the last triennium, he said that, when the figures are adjusted for inflation, "we are about nine million behind where we should be." The proposed budget for the triennium totals \$139,385,000.

"We are still far short of what we need to accomplish the mission we're called to do," he added. "We are back from the disastrous place of five or six years ago—but we shouldn't be complacent." While the income from investments has compensated for a decrease in diocesan contributions, he said, "We are in a good place to go forward in the new triennium" because the trends are "very positive."

Duggan said that the \$250 million net worth of the church "has been rising dramatically" because of investments. "We are still a wealthy church, especially when compared with the rest of the world," he added.

The Rev. Jim Boyle described the recent court decision holding a diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada liable for sexual abuse in residential schools it operated for indigenous children, in cooperation with the government. He said that the church is facing 300 similar lawsuits involving hundreds of millions of dollars. "Our first goal is healing and reconciliation for those who have been damaged" and with Canadian First Nation people. "Many aboriginal members of our church are torn," he said. The second goal is survival of the church, even though that might mean a dramatic change in its present institutional form.

The council passed a resolution expressing its solidarity with the Canadians "as it seeks healing and reconciliation with aboriginal peoples who have been damaged through their residential schools experience and as it deals with the human and financial pain resulting from recent litigation...."

In other action, the council voted to:

- endorse the decision by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to order Elian Gonzalez returned to Cuba and his natural father;
- adopt a mission statement, "The Episcopal Church in Service to Refugees and Immigrants";
- approve a one-time grant of \$300,000 to help the National Council of Churches in its "financial recovery and renewal";
- express to the government of Israel its opposition to the building of a mosque next to the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth;
- monitor the progress toward implementation of the canon opening the ordination process for women in all dioceses;
- support a network of diocesan administrators by providing a line item in the church's budget.

--James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-019

Presiding bishop extends his conversation with the church in second teleconference

by James Solheim

(ENS) Almost exactly two years after his investiture as the 25th presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, Frank T. Griswold extended his conversation with the church during a second teleconference.

Sitting in the chapel of St. Martin's School in a suburb of New Orleans, surrounded by people who were part of a mission rally for the Diocese of Louisiana, Griswold invited Bishop Charles Jenkins and several diocesan leaders to describe the rally and some of their ministries. Jenkins noted how difficult it is to change, to move from what he described as "a maintenance-oriented culture to a mission-oriented church." After a decline over the last 19 years, he said that the diocese has set a goal of doubling the number of disciples by the year 2010.

Moving into the congregation, Griswold sat down next to Margaret Larom of the church's Office of Anglican and Global Relations to talk about the church's global mission. "For more than 200 years Episcopalians have been spreading the gospel throughout the Americas and the whole world," she said. Four of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion "are the direct result of our mission efforts over the centuries."

She told about a recent trip to the West African country of Liberia "where we have a long, long missionary history that we can be proud of." She said that the team from the Episcopal Church Center saw the results of recent civil war but they also went "to see how we can help reconnect and rebuild, especially schools." All baptized Episcopalians, she pointed out, are members of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the corporate name of the church adopted by General Convention in 1935.

Jubilee vision

In response to a question from the audience in the chapel, Griswold described the emerging vision of the church as a Jubilee community, moving to the vision that "we are really called to be a transformed people, a people of unbounded generosity, a people who try to think and live out of the imagination of Christ."

A question received by fax from a downlink site in New York asked how a small parish could witness in a largely Catholic area. Griswold said that the parish should examine its life of prayer and worship and ask whether people find "a genuine atmosphere of hospitality and welcome" when they visit. An e-mail question from Houston asked about plans to make church facilities more accessible to the disabled. Griswold said that he was encouraged by efforts at the congregational level but admitted there was still considerable work to do to remove physical barriers.

A telephoned question from Texas raised some questions about how the General Convention would deal with controversial questions. Griswold said that the reality is that difficult or potentially divisive issues can't be put aside or ignored "if it's part of the life of the church." But he suggested that deputies and bishops should ask what is the best way forward, whether a vote or an extended conversation would be most appropriate, "not just to be held hostage to the urgencies that are introduced from the outside. The body has to act very deliberately and very prayerfully," he said.

Moving across the chapel, Griswold sat down next to Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, and the Rev. Rosemari Sullivan, executive officer of the General Convention.

Sullivan said that the Denver convention would attempt to introduce some new elements so that "legislation takes place in the context of conversation," beginning with a Jubilee time of prayer and reflection.

Addressing the issue of tension between the two houses of General Convention, Chinnis said that the tension is "more in the minds of the people looking at it than in the minds of the two persons involved." Using the perceived threat of the Y2K scare at the turn of the millennium, she said that the convention is "going to be a lot of beautiful fireworks going off that will illuminate things rather than splitting the church apart. We've been working very hard to make sure that happens," she said.

Crucifixion and resurrection

Bounding out of his chair, Griswold moved across the chapel to sit down next to his wife Phoebe, Bishop Leo Frade of Honduras, Sandra Swan, executive director of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, and Abigail Nelson, a program associate for the fund.

"A year ago we were hanging on the cross," said Frade in describing the effects of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua. "We were really crucified in a horrible situation. It was in total darkness and desperation. But I can tell you that we are now in resurrection," he quickly added. "The Easter of resurrection has taken place. The response of the church has been tremendous—and the response through the Presiding Bishop's Fund has been more than extraordinary. And I really rejoice in that, in the reality that we have conquered destruction." The fund is helping to build 500 new homes in a village that was destroyed.

Swan said the Honduras project is a good example of disaster relief that turns into rehabilitation and sustainable development. Nelson called it "wholistic rehabilitation," not just helping to build houses but also community. Phoebe Griswold said that the fund was moving into "planting the seeds of development in its relief work."

A man from the audience asked Griswold about a potential shortage of clergy. Anticipating many retirements in the near future, Griswold said that "a number of dioceses have adopted what I would call a recruiting stance toward the ordained ministry, instead of simply waiting for someone to come knock on the door." He also pointed to the lack of clergy under the age of 35, although he is encouraged that the age level of last fall's entering seminary class has "dropped drastically, and we seem to be seeing the fruits of some of this recruitment work that's going on around the church."

Recognizing the sin of racism

Using the celebration of the birth of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. to introduce the topic of racism, Griswold moved to a chair beside the Rev. Sandra Wilson of Minneapolis, president of the Union of Black Episcopalians. "I think we have moved from a place in the church of the denial of the reality of racism into a recognition of it as sin in our midst," she said. Yet that does not remove racism and the church will always face fresh challenges, as it does in the decision whether to use the Adam's Mark Hotel in Denver.

"Part of the challenge to us is that we are not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewal of our minds and spirits—and that, as prayerful people, we recognize the need constantly to be engaged in growing ourselves, in challenging ourselves, and not being afraid of the conversation." She argued that "we do not want to be a mirror of society, rather we want to lead society to a new place of justice and mercy."

Wilson said that the King holiday should remind us, as King said in quoting Dante, that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in the face of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality. And that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, that what affects one directly affects all of us indirectly. "So the challenge before us as a church is to recognize in this time of Jubilee, in this time when we are looking at ourselves as transformed people of boundless generosity in that spirit of Christ, to recognize that until every person is free, none of us is free," she said.

The teleconference, produced by the church's electronic media office, ended with excerpts of a new video which is based on an invitation "to come and see our church afresh in some of its manifestations, and in a variety of settings," as Griswold said in his introduction on the video. "What it really seeks to do is give all of us an expanded and enriched sense of what it means to be limbs of Christ's risen body, what it means to be Episcopalians not simply in our own local community or diocese, but Episcopalians broadly across this land in other places," he added.

And then came a surprise, as Griswold welcomed a Dixieland band into the chapel and joined a procession of saints as they moved out into the warm sunshine singing, "The Saints Go Marching In."

--James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-020

Lutherans, Episcopalians discuss corporate social responsibility

by Frank Imhoff

(ENS) "This was a first-time acquaintance for all of us," said Dr. Robert C. Holland of Bethesda, Maryland, newly elected chair of the advisory committee for corporate social responsibility of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) after the first meeting with its counterpart committee on social responsibility in investments of the Episcopal Church.

The committees advise and counsel various commissions and institutions of their churches about the social records of corporations in which they hold stock. In some cases, shareholder resolutions may be considered to effect change in the corporation's practices.

Generally, resolutions are filed with corporations before the end of each year in preparation for stockholder meetings to be held the following spring. Many resolutions are withdrawn before reaching those meetings because they prompt significant dialogues between the filer and the corporation's management.

"There was a synergy here that was extraordinary," Holland said after meeting with Episcopalians early in January. "We found they were extraordinarily knowledgeable, intelligent, committed people. We learned from them. I think they learned from us." He added, "You can tell the group as a whole felt that way with how quickly they accepted the idea of having another meeting."

That meeting will be held September 15 in New York to coincide with a meeting of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). About 275 religious organizations,

including the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, coordinate their corporate social responsibility efforts through the ICCR.

The Rev. Brian Grieves, director of the Episcopal Church's peace and justice ministries, said that "there is a real possibility for collaborative work with the ELCA in the area of socially responsible investments" and he looks forward to discussing the possibilities at the September meeting.

Joyce Austin of New York, who chairs the Episcopal committee, said in an interview that it was "an important and exciting exchange. We quickly knew that we had much to share—and much to learn—from each other."

New nature of poverty

The committees met together to discuss the idea of Lutherans and Episcopalians co-sponsoring shareholder resolutions on one or two issues in which they share common concerns. Jean Pogge, senior vice president of the National Funding Group at South Shore Bank in Chicago, addressed a plenary meeting of the two committees.

"It's criminal to think that people are okay because they have jobs," said Pogge. "Poverty has taken a new nature in our community." She said the minimum wage cannot support many of the families in the area South Shore Bank serves.

South Shore Bank was established in 1973 as the first community development bank in the United States. It has lent more than \$400 million to more than 11,000 businesses and individuals in economically depressed areas of Chicago. The bank's model has been replicated in other states and other countries, Pogge said.

Inner-city and rural areas of the United States are "under-invested communities," disconnected from the prosperity of the larger economy, she said. "With the economy doing so well ... it isn't as true in our neighborhood as it is in other neighborhoods."

She added that "faith-based investors have been very important to our work. Some of our early shareholders were church institutions. We're talking about putting your money into a federally insured bank account at market rates of interest, where you know your money is going to be used for a purpose that matches your values."

In an interview, ICCR director Timothy H. Smith expressed his belief that "the faith communities have had a great impact on corporate thinking." Smith, a member of the Episcopal committee, gave a brief report on ICCR activities to the Lutheran committee. He said that investors are looking for companies that share many of the values religious organizations have supported for years—racial diversity in decision-making, a good environmental record and fair labor practices. "It's going to stick if moral values are blended with why it makes good business sense," he said. "As people of faith, we are called to be in this ministry."

--Frank Imhoff is associate director of the ELCA's Office of News and Information.

2000-021

Episcopalians among 900 to endorse Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality

by Kathryn McCormick

(ENS) With the endorsement of hundreds of religious leaders and teachers, including nine Episcopal bishops, a nonprofit organization that provides information and promotes education about sexuality has publicly offered a "Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing" that calls for, among other points, "full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in congregational life, including their ordination, and the blessing of same-sex couples."

At the time of the announcement on January 18, the declaration, issued by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), had been signed by more than 900 clergy and other religious workers, according to Debra Haffner, president of SIECUS. She said her group anticipated that many more would add their endorsements now that the document had been made public.

The declaration was released at a news conference attended by John Buehrens, president of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, and John Thomas, head of the United Church of Christ. Clergy and other members of those churches formed the majority of the original signers, along with members of Judaism's Reform and Reconstructionist branches.

"In a culture that often seeks to exploit or repress our sexuality, it is critical for people of faith to offer an alternative vision that places sexuality in the context of divine holiness and moral integrity," said Thomas.

Those who signed

Among Episcopalians who signed the document were former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning; Bishop Charles Bennison of Pennsylvania; Bishop Frederick Borsch of Los Angeles; Otis Charles, retired bishop of Utah; Bishop Steven Charleston, dean of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Bishop John Croneberger of Newark; Bishop David Richards, former executive director of the church's Office of Pastoral Development; Bishop Harold Hopkins, also a former head of Pastoral Development, and Bishop Orris G. Walker, Jr., of Long Island.

The Episcopal Church, as well as the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church in the USA, which also were represented among the signatures, will hold denominational assemblies this year at which matters concerning sexuality will be a focus of discussion.

Although homosexuality is one of the most hotly disputed issues in churches, the declaration, which was scheduled to appear in newspaper ads in several cities during January, also advocates lifelong age-appropriate sexuality education in schools, seminaries and community settings, as well as a faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including access to abortion.

Calling sexuality "God's life-giving and life-fulfilling gift," the document goes on to say, "Our culture needs a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice rather than particular sexual acts. All persons have the right and responsibility to lead sexual lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent and pleasure."

A necessary step

The document was a necessary step to insure a real dialogue on sexuality, said Haffner, who led the move three years ago to begin work on the paper. "The religious right has staked the public claim to the dialogue on sexuality and religion. There was a huge outpouring of interest in doing something to articulate a different vision."

In May of 1999, SIECUS brought together more than 20 theologians from diverse traditions for a meeting at the College of Preachers in Washington, D.C., to create a progressive statement on sexuality and religion, she said. Among the group, she noted, were Bishop David Richards of the Center for Sexuality and Religion and the Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward, a professor at the Episcopal Divinity School.

The document was polished during last summer, then privately circulated until it could be released with a large number of endorsements, Haffner said.

"We come from diverse religious communities to recognize sexuality as central to our humanity and as integral to our spirituality. We are speaking out against the pain, brokenness, oppression, and loss of meaning that many experience about their sexuality," the document begins, adding, "We sin when this sacred gift is abused or exploited. However, the great promise of our traditions is love, healing, and restored relationships."

"God hears the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality," the paper declares. "We are called today to see, hear, and respond to the suffering caused by violence against women and sexual minorities, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality."

"As someone moving into ministry, I don't understand how churches have avoided really discussing these things," said Haffner. "Sexuality issues together "are such an issue of brokenness to people in the pews, whether it's sexuality, divorce, abuse—it's a whole range."

--Kathryn McCormick is associate director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-022

Church of England studies relaxation of rules on remarriage

by Kathryn McCormick

(ENS) Amid a blaze of criticism and praise, a working group of the Church of England's general synod has released a draft report loosening the church's strict rules governing remarriage of divorced persons.

The January 25 report, seen as an acknowledgement of the reality of failed marriages in today's society—England has the second-highest divorce rate in Europe—affirms marriage but provides specific circumstances under which those whose first marriages ended in divorce might wed again.

While traditionalists in the church attacked the report as a new assault on the institution of marriage, Bishop Mark Santer of Birmingham welcomed it as "principled and pastorally realistic." He added, "The question of remarriage of those who have previously

been married has been widely discussed throughout the church for at least 20 years. This report in effect codifies what has already become practice in many parishes.”

The document will be debated by and voted on in the General Synod.

Since the 17th century, the church refused to marry persons whose previous partners were still living, a stance seen with some irony, given the marital history of King Henry VIII, who launched the church in part as a way to secure a divorce from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. In 1981, the General Synod resolved that certain persons could remarry while their former spouses were living.

Bishops' marriage statement

Late last year, the church's House of Bishops, acknowledging the growing pressures among churchgoers to remarry, issued a statement reflecting on marriage, the relationship so long held by the church as a lifelong commitment, and pointing the way toward the acceptability of remarriage.

Under the proposed new laws, divorced persons may remarry if they meet at least twice with their parish clergy, who must seek the advice of the bishop; if each person has looked honestly at his or her first marriage, fully disclosing to the prospective partner the background that led to the divorce; if the children and spouse from the previous marriage are provided for; if the couple's new relationship was not responsible for the end of the previous marriage; and if neither the bride nor the groom has been divorced more than once.

In many ways, these new rules match those already expressed in the canons of the Episcopal Church.

At first, the church refused to remarry persons whose former spouses were living, official policy in 1804 and codified in the canons in 1868. In 1973, after years of sermons, papers, debate and resolutions, the canons were changed to allow remarriage of divorced persons under certain exceptions.

The exceptions demand that a person seeking remarriage satisfy the clergy that the prior marriage has been dissolved by a civil court, that clergy make it clear that “concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse and of any children of the prior marriage,” and that clergy consult with the bishop and obtain the bishop's consent.

In both churches, clergy may decline to perform any marriage ceremony.

Bishop Michael Scott-Joynt of Winchester, who headed the working group that produced the British report, said, “If these proposals win acceptance, the church will not simply marry anyone who turns up and asks to be married.

“In many situations there are strong pastoral reasons why a local church will want to help people make a new start. With some people, however, it is clear that their past marriage has not been left behind, that its obligations have not been honored. Some people, in asking the church to help them to make a second marriage, are asking us to approve of behavior of which we cannot approve,” he said.

--Kathryn McCormick is associate director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-023

Official dialogue with Orthodox will resume after years of suspension

by James Solheim

(ENS) The official dialogue between the Episcopal Church and the Orthodox will resume this year, following several years of suspension. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) suspended the dialogue in 1991 because of some developments in the Episcopal Church around sexuality issues.

The goal of the reestablished dialogue is “to renew the friendly, historic relationship of the two churches,” according to a statement released by the Rev. David Perry, the church’s ecumenical officer, following a meeting of Episcopal and Orthodox leaders. “The many years of cooperation and friendship will provide a firm foundation and focus for the work of the dialogue participants in the years ahead,” the statement said.

The Orthodox-Episcopal dialogue in the United States is among the oldest ecumenical relationships, the statement pointed out. “The new conversations will continue, deepen and honor the tradition of that friendship.”

In June of 1991 Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, notified the Episcopal Church that the church’s synod of bishops vote to suspend dialogue “resulted from recent developments such as the ordination of women, including one who is a practicing lesbian, and a recent article by Bishop Spong which characterized the Apostle Paul as a homosexual.”

The decision was reviewed at a fall meeting of SCOBA, which represents 10 Orthodox churches. It sustained the suspension of dialogue with the Episcopal Church and membership in the National Council of Churches.

Former Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning said that he was “encouraged” by a private meeting with Iakovos in October. The church leaders agreed that, to remain faithful to the central task of seeking Christian unity, churches must consult with each other as they face fundamental issues.

Despite the suspension “the friendships remained strong and they even deepened,” said Bishop Richard Grein of New York, who will co-chair the dialogue committee. “These are our oldest partners so we are delighted to be back in official dialogue.” Grein visits the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul every year to keep the lines of communication and consultation open. “And locally in New York in recent years the relations have never been better,” he added.

Despite some tensions, there have also been significant common agreements in the past, the statement emphasized. In the ecumenical setting there are key issues on which Orthodox and Episcopalians have great agreement. And the conversation has been encouraged by the recent visits of Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to Moscow and Istanbul and by the on-going international Orthodox-Anglican Dialogue.

A steering committee has been established that includes Orthodox representatives: Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, the Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, the Rev. Robert Stephanopoulos, and the Rev. Paul Schneirla. Episcopal representatives are: Bishop Richard Grein, the Rev. John Backus, the Rev. J. Robert Wright and Perry. The dialogue is scheduled to resume this November.

--James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-024

Foundation Fellows to focus on Anglican Communion's divisions

by Lindsay Hardin Freeman

(ENS) For the first time, the Episcopal Church Foundation has called together all its Fellows—leading theological scholars and teachers—to probe one issue. In a February conference entitled “Tradition and Innovation in Anglicanism: Hermeneutics in a Global Communion,” the group will discuss the bases for the deep divisions in the Anglican Communion that came to light during the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

The work of hermeneutics—the study of interpretation, especially in how we seek to understand scripture—has taken on a new importance since the 1998 conference exposed differences in basic faith understanding. Much has been said about the disparity between some of the viewpoints of the Episcopal Church in particular and those of the developing world, particularly Africa.

With the new leadership of the African and Asian churches, the Anglican Communion overall finds itself dealing with the realities of not only a post-modernist world, but a post-colonial one as well.

A rich pool of talent

A total of 80 participants, including faculty, students, and trustees from all 11 Episcopal seminaries, will attend the February gathering, along with a mix of parish clergy, independent scholars, and faculty from both the religious and secular academy.

Scheduled at the House of the Redeemer in New York City, the conference will present speakers including Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold and several Fellows: Cynthia Kittredge, Ephraim Radner, Titus Presler, Leander Harding, J. Robert Wright, Robert Prichard, Christopher Duraisingh and Ellen Davis. Homilies will be given by Harold Lewis and Robert Hughes.

According to Donn Mitchell of the foundation staff, the interdisciplinary gathering of scholars is built upon the model of the Church Congresses that occurred periodically from the 1870s through the early 1930s. Papers were presented from a variety of perspectives—with open discussion but no necessity to vote legislatively allowing participants to think through issues free from political pressure to decide. “As a model, it really speaks to the Anglican experience,” he said.

Finding points of convergence

Episcopal Divinity School Professor Ian Douglas, who heads up the Fellows Forum, views the gathering as important on two levels. "First, it is vital for the Anglican Communion and Christianity—at a time that the church is moving from colonial to post-colonial life, and from modern to post-modern life—to look at the central question of "how do we know what we know about faith in the church and where are the points of convergence and points of conflict in these changing times? My own particular bias is to an Anglican hermeneutic that embraces plurality and openness."

But second, he says, "The reality of the Foundation Fellows coming together across our theological and disciplinary differences in order to have reasoned theological discourse is crucial at a time of increasing anti-intellectualism. The fact that all of us can come together bodes well for the possibilities of theological discourse and leadership in the church."

The Episcopal Church Foundation is the major supporter of advanced theological training for ecclesial scholars in the Episcopal Church, through its program of fellowships for doctoral work. Nearly a third of the foundation's 152 Fellows have gone on to serve in one or more of the church's 11 seminaries.

Since 1964, the Episcopal Church Foundation has invested close to \$5 million in the Graduate Fellowship Program. Fellows have been expected to have at least 20 years of potential teaching time ahead of them and have earned doctorates in a wide range of subjects, depending on the needs of the church. Although early recipients were all clergy, 18 percent of fellowships have been awarded to lay men and women.

The Fellows Forum was conceived by Dr. Harold Whiteman, former head of the Foundation's Education Committee, who suggested that these intellectual leaders be organized formally as "lively advocates for the life of the mind" in the Episcopal Church.

--The Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman is priest associate at St. Martin's-by-the-Lake Episcopal Church in Minnetonka Beach, Minnesota.



news digest

2000-018D

Executive Council sifts through variety of concerns, votes against using Denver hotel

(ENS) The Episcopal Church's Executive Council met in New Orleans January 17-20, sifting through a variety of concerns over this summer's General Convention, deciding not to use a Denver hotel that is part of a chain accused of a broad pattern of racial discrimination.

In an ironic twist, the council's unanimous vote came on the day much of the country was celebrating the birthday of slain civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., to withdraw. A January 17 statement by Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold and Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, said that the allegations in the Justice Department suit, coupled with "other reports from local leaders citing similar problems with the Adams Mark in Denver," led to the decision. The statement (*text in News Features*) said that the action was "the most appropriate response," especially in light of the church's "profound commitment to eradicating racism in our church and society."

Bishop Frank Turner of Pennsylvania said that the process of reaching a decision was better than the one used to go to Phoenix in 1991, despite the fact that Arizona did not celebrate King's birthday. "We feel good about the process," he said. "It was a tough decision but the right one." Griswold commended the council for the "graciousness" of the discussion, adding that it represented a "wonderful quality of care and thoughtfulness." In his opening remarks to the council, Griswold described his travels and encounters since the last meeting. He said that he was "extremely sad" with the isolation the Diocese in Colombia is suffering because decades of civil war has meant that it has not had a companion relationship with another diocese for over 20 years. And he said that a meeting called by the archbishop of Canterbury in response to a 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution urging dialogue on the divisive issue of homosexuality was "an extremely rich and positive exchange." He also met with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican to discuss the future of the official international dialogue between Roman Catholics and Anglicans, a commission which Griswold co-chairs.

In her comments to the council, Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, reflected on reconciliation, describing a meeting of the U.S. churches that are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Atlanta where "the whole theme was reconciliation," including a sermon by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at Ebenezer Baptist Church from the pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chinnis also held out the possibility that “through the miracle of modern telecommunication the majority of deputies and bishops can participate in conversation, exchange of information, testing ideas, sharing views, debating positions through e-mail” months before General Convention. Only 19 percent of deputies at the last convention used the potential but that has quadrupled to over 72 percent now. “The 2000 Convention will be the first to benefit from the kind of preparation afforded by this non-geographic conversation,” she said.

Treasurer Steve Duggan took council members through the budget that will be presented at this summer’s General Convention, pointing out “how the numbers have changed and how that represents a change in emphasis” in the church’s mission. In showing the income in the last triennium, he said that, when the figures are adjusted for inflation, “we are about nine million behind where we should be.” The proposed budget for the triennium totals \$139,385,000.

“We are still far short of what we need to accomplish the mission we’re called to do,” he added. “We are back from the disastrous place of five or six years ago—but we shouldn’t be complacent.” While the income from investments has compensated for a decrease in diocesan contributions, he said. “We are in a good place to go forward in the new triennium” because the trends are “very positive.”

In other action, the council voted to:

- endorse the decision by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to order Elian Gonzalez returned to Cuba and his natural father;
- adopt a mission statement, “The Episcopal Church in Service to Refugees and Immigrants”;
- approve a one-time grant of \$300,000 to help the National Council of Churches in its “financial recovery and renewal”;
- express to the government of Israel its opposition to the building of a mosque next to the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth;
- monitor the progress toward implementation of the canon opening the ordination process for women in all dioceses;
- support a network of diocesan administrators by providing a line item in the church’s budget.

—by James Solheim

2000-019D

Presiding bishop extends his conversation with the church in second teleconference

(ENS) Almost exactly two years after his investiture as the 25th presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, Frank T. Griswold extended his conversation with the church during a second teleconference.

Sitting in the chapel of St. Martin’s School in a suburb of New Orleans, surrounded by people who were part of a mission rally for the Diocese of Louisiana, Griswold invited Bishop Charles Jenkins and several diocesan leaders to describe the rally and some of their

ministries. Jenkins noted how difficult it is to change, to move from what he described as “a maintenance-oriented culture to a mission-oriented church.” After a decline over the last 19 years, he said that the diocese has set a goal of doubling the number of disciples by the year 2010.

Moving into the congregation, Griswold sat down next to Margaret Larom of the church’s Office of Anglican and Global Relations to talk about the church’s global mission. “For more than 200 years Episcopalians have been spreading the gospel throughout the Americas and the whole world,” she said. Four of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion “are the direct result of our mission efforts over the centuries.”

All baptized Episcopalians, she pointed out, are members of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the corporate name of the church adopted by General Convention in 1935.

In response to a question from the audience in the chapel, Griswold described the emerging vision of the church as a Jubilee community, moving to the vision that “we are really called to be a transformed people, a people of unbounded generosity, a people who try to think and live out of the imagination of Christ.”

A question received by fax from a downlink site in New York asked how a small parish could witness in a largely Catholic area. Griswold said that the parish should examine its life of prayer and worship and ask whether people find “a genuine atmosphere of hospitality and welcome” when they visit. A telephoned question from Texas raised some questions about how the General Convention would deal with controversial questions. Griswold said that the reality is that difficult or potentially divisive issues can’t be put aside or ignored “if it’s part of the life of the church.” But deputies and bishops should ask what is the best way forward, whether a vote or an extended conversation would be most appropriate, “not just to be held hostage to the urgencies that are introduced from the outside. The body has to act very deliberately and very prayerfully,” he said.

Moving across the chapel, Griswold sat down next to Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, and the Rev. Rosemari Sullivan, executive officer of the General Convention.

Sullivan said that the Denver convention would attempt to introduce some new elements so that “legislation takes place in the context of conversation,” beginning with a Jubilee time of prayer and reflection.

Addressing the issue of tension between the two houses of General Convention, Chinnis said that the tension is “more in the minds of the people looking at it than in the minds of the two persons involved.” Using the perceived threat of the Y2K scare at the turn of the millennium, she said that the convention is “going to be a lot of beautiful fireworks going off that will illuminate things rather than splitting the church apart. We’ve been working very hard to make sure that happens,” she said.

Bounding out of his chair, Griswold moved across the chapel to sit down next to his wife Phoebe, Bishop Leo Frade of Honduras, Sandra Swan, executive director of the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief, and Abigail Nelson, a program associate for the fund.

“A year ago we were hanging on the cross,” said Frade in describing the effects of Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua. “We were really crucified in a horrible situation. It was in total darkness and desperation. But I can tell you that we are now in resurrection,” he quickly added. “The Easter of resurrection has taken place. The response of the church has been tremendous—and the response through the Presiding Bishop’s Fund has been more than extraordinary. And I really rejoice in that, in the reality that we have

conquered destruction.” The fund is helping to build 500 new homes in a village that was destroyed.

Using the celebration of the birth of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. to introduce the topic of racism, Griswold moved to a chair beside the Rev. Sandra Wilson of Minneapolis, president of the Union of Black Episcopalians. “I think we have moved from a place in the church of the denial of the reality of racism into a recognition of it as sin in our midst,” she said. Yet that does not remove racism and the church will always face fresh challenges, as it does in the decision whether to use the Adam’s Mark Hotel in Denver because of a Justice Department suit alleging a broad pattern of racial discrimination.

And then came a surprise, as Griswold welcomed a Dixieland band into the chapel and joined a procession of saints as they moved out into the warm sunshine singing, “The Saints Go Marching In.” --by James Solheim

2000-020D

Lutherans, Episcopalians discuss corporate social responsibility

(ENS) “This was a first-time acquaintance for all of us,” said Dr. Robert C. Holland of Bethesda, Maryland, newly elected chair of the advisory committee for corporate social responsibility of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) after the first meeting with its counterpart committee on social responsibility in investments of the Episcopal Church.

The committees advise and counsel various commissions and institutions of their churches about the social records of corporations in which they hold stock. In some cases, shareholder resolutions may be considered to effect change in the corporation’s practices.

Generally, resolutions are filed with corporations before the end of each year in preparation for stockholder meetings to be held the following spring. Many resolutions are withdrawn before reaching those meetings because they prompt significant dialogues between the filer and the corporation’s management.

“There was a synergy here that was extraordinary,” Holland said after meeting with Episcopalians early in January. “We found they were extraordinarily knowledgeable, intelligent, committed people. We learned from them. I think they learned from us.” He added, “You can tell the group as a whole felt that way with how quickly they accepted the idea of having another meeting.”

That meeting will be held September 15 in New York to coincide with a meeting of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR). About 275 religious organizations, including the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, coordinate their corporate social responsibility efforts through the ICCR.

The Rev. Brian Grieses, director of the Episcopal Church’s peace and justice ministries, said that “there is a real possibility for collaborative work with the ELCA in the area of socially responsible investments” and he looks forward to discussing the possibilities at the September meeting.

Joyce Austin of New York, who chairs the Episcopal committee, said in an interview that it was “an important and exciting exchange. We quickly knew that we had much to share—and much to learn—from each other.”

In an interview, ICCR director Timothy H. Smith expressed his belief that “the faith communities have had a great impact on corporate thinking.” Smith, a member of the Episcopal committee, gave a brief report on ICCR activities to the Lutheran committee. He said that investors are looking for companies that share many of the values religious organizations have supported for years—racial diversity in decision-making, a good environmental record and fair labor practices. “It’s going to stick if moral values are blended with why it makes good business sense,” he said. “As people of faith, we are called to be in this ministry.” --by **Frank Imhoff**

2000-021D

Episcopalians among 900 to endorse Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality

(ENS) With the endorsement of hundreds of religious leaders and teachers, including nine Episcopal bishops, a nonprofit organization that provides information and promotes education about sexuality has publicly offered a “Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing” that calls for, among other points, “full inclusion of women and sexual minorities in congregational life, including their ordination, and the blessing of same-sex couples.”

At the time of the announcement on January 18, the declaration, issued by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), had been signed by more than 900 clergy and other religious workers, according to Debra Haffner, president of SIECUS. She said her group anticipated that many more would add their endorsements now that the document had been made public.

The declaration was released at a news conference attended by John Buehrens, president of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, and John Thomas, head of the United Church of Christ. Clergy and other members of those churches formed the majority of the original signers, along with members of Judaism’s Reform and Reconstructionist branches.

“In a culture that often seeks to exploit or repress our sexuality, it is critical for people of faith to offer an alternative vision that places sexuality in the context of divine holiness and moral integrity,” said Thomas.

Among Episcopalians who signed the document were former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning; Bishop Charles Bennison of Pennsylvania; Bishop Frederick Borsch of Los Angeles; Otis Charles, retired bishop of Utah; Bishop Steven Charleston, dean of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Bishop John Croneberger of Newark; Bishop David Richards, former executive director of the church’s Office of Pastoral Development; Bishop Harold Hopkins, also a former head of Pastoral Development, and Bishop Orris G. Walker, Jr., of Long Island.

Although homosexuality is one of the most hotly disputed issues in churches, the declaration, which was scheduled to appear in newspaper ads in several cities during January, also advocates lifelong age-appropriate sexuality education in schools, seminaries and community settings, as well as a faith-based commitment to sexual and reproductive rights, including access to abortion.

Calling sexuality “God’s life-giving and life-fulfilling gift,” the document goes on to say, “Our culture needs a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice

rather than particular sexual acts. All persons have the right and responsibility to lead sexual lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent and pleasure.”

The document was a necessary step to insure a real dialogue on sexuality, said Haffner, who led the move three years ago to begin work on the paper. “The religious right has staked the public claim to the dialogue on sexuality and religion. There was a huge outpouring of interest in doing something to articulate a different vision.”

--by Kathryn McCormick

2000-022D

Church of England studies relaxation of rules on remarriage

(ENS) Amid a blaze of criticism and praise, a working group of the Church of England’s general synod has released a draft report loosening the church’s strict rules governing remarriage of divorced persons.

The January 25 report, seen as an acknowledgement of the reality of failed marriages in today’s society—England has the second-highest divorce rate in Europe—affirms marriage but provides specific circumstances under which those whose first marriages ended in divorce might wed again.

While traditionalists in the church attacked the report as a new assault on the institution of marriage, Bishop Mark Santer of Birmingham welcomed it as “principled and pastorally realistic.” He added, “The question of remarriage of those who have previously been married has been widely discussed throughout the church for at least 20 years. This report in effect codifies what has already become practice in many parishes.”

The document will be debated by and voted on in the General Synod.

Since the 17th century, the church refused to marry persons whose previous partners were still living, a stance seen with some irony, given the marital history of King Henry VIII, who launched the church in part as a way to secure a divorce from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. In 1981, the General Synod resolved that certain persons could remarry while their former spouses were living.

Late last year, the church’s House of Bishops, acknowledging growing pressures among churchgoers to remarry, issued a statement reflecting on marriage, the relationship so long held by the church as a lifelong commitment, and pointing the way toward the acceptability of remarriage.

Under the proposed new laws, divorced persons may remarry if they meet at least twice with their parish clergy, who must seek the advice of the bishop; if each person has looked honestly at his or her first marriage, fully disclosing to the prospective partner the background that led to the divorce; if the children and spouse from the previous marriage are provided for; if the couple’s new relationship was not responsible for the end of the previous marriage; and if neither the bride nor the groom has been divorced more than once.

In many ways, these new rules match those already expressed in the canons of the Episcopal Church.

Bishop Michael Scott-Joynt of Winchester, who headed the working group that produced the British report, said, "If these proposals win acceptance, the church will not simply marry anyone who turns up and asks to be married.

"In many situations there are strong pastoral reasons why a local church will want to help people make a new start. With some people, however, it is clear that their past marriage has not been left behind, that its obligations have not been honored. Some people, in asking the church to help them to make a second marriage, are asking us to approve of behavior of which we cannot approve," he said.--by **Kathryn McCormick**

2000-023D

Official dialogue with Orthodox will resume after years of suspension

(ENS) The official dialogue between the Episcopal Church and the Orthodox will resume this year, following several years of suspension. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) suspended the dialogue in 1991 because of some developments in the Episcopal Church around sexuality issues.

The goal of the reestablished dialogue is "to renew the friendly, historic relationship of the two churches," according to a statement released by the Rev. David Perry, the church's ecumenical officer, following a meeting of Episcopal and Orthodox leaders. "The many years of cooperation and friendship will provide a firm foundation and focus for the work of the dialogue participants in the years ahead," the statement said.

The Orthodox-Episcopal dialogue in the United States is among the oldest ecumenical relationships, the statement pointed out. "The new conversations will continue, deepen and honor the tradition of that friendship."

In June of 1991 Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, notified the Episcopal Church that the church's synod of bishops vote to suspend dialogue "resulted from recent developments such as the ordination of women, including one who is a practicing lesbian, and a recent article by Bishop Spong which characterized the Apostle Paul as a homosexual."

The decision was reviewed at a fall meeting of SCOBA, which represents 10 Orthodox churches. It sustained the suspension of dialogue with the Episcopal Church and membership in the National Council of Churches.

Former Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning said that he was "encouraged" by a private meeting with Iakovos in October. The church leaders agreed that, to remain faithful to the central task of seeking Christian unity, churches must consult with each other as they face fundamental issues.

Despite the suspension "the friendships remained strong and they even deepened," said Bishop Richard Grein of New York, who will co-chair the dialogue committee. "These are our oldest partners so we are delighted to be back in official dialogue." Grein visits the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul every year to keep the lines of communication and consultation open. "And locally in New York in recent years the relations have never been better," he added.

Despite some tensions, there have also been significant common agreements in the past, the statement emphasized. In the ecumenical setting there are key issues on which

Orthodox and Episcopalians have great agreement. And the conversation has been encouraged by the recent visits of Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to Moscow and Istanbul and by the on-going international Orthodox-Anglican Dialogue.

A steering committee has been established that includes Orthodox representatives: Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos, the Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky, the Rev. Robert Stephanopoulos, and the Rev. Paul Schneirla. Episcopal representatives are: Bishop Richard Grein, the Rev. John Backus, the Rev. J. Robert Wright and Perry. The dialogue is scheduled to resume this November. —by **James Solheim**

2000-024D

Foundation Fellows to focus on Anglican Communion's divisions

(ENS) For the first time, the Episcopal Church Foundation has called together all its Fellows—leading theological scholars and teachers—to probe one issue. In a February conference entitled “Tradition and Innovation in Anglicanism: Hermeneutics in a Global Communion,” the group will discuss the bases for the deep divisions in the Anglican Communion that came to light during the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

The work of hermeneutics—the study of interpretation, especially in how we seek to understand scripture—has taken on a new importance since the 1998 conference exposed differences in basic faith understanding. Much has been said about the disparity between some of the viewpoints of the Episcopal Church in particular and those of the developing world, particularly in Africa.

With the new leadership of the African and Asian churches, the Anglican Communion overall finds itself dealing with the realities of not only a post-modernist world, but a post-colonial one as well.

A total of 80 participants, including faculty, students, and trustees from all 11 Episcopal seminaries, will attend the February gathering, along with a mix of parish clergy, independent scholars, and faculty from both the religious and secular academy.

Scheduled at the House of the Redeemer in New York City, the conference will present speakers including Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold and several Fellows: Cynthia Kittredge, Ephraim Radner, Titus Presler, Leander Harding, J. Robert Wright, Robert Prichard, Christopher Duraisingh and Ellen Davis. Homilies will be given by Harold Lewis and Robert Hughes.

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The Fellows Forum was conceived by Dr. Harold Whiteman, former head of the Foundation's Education Committee, who suggested that these intellectual leaders be organized formally as "lively advocates for the life of the mind" in the Episcopal Church.

--by **Lindsay Hardin Freeman**



news briefs

2000-025

Archbishop of Canterbury opposes efforts to scrap ban on promoting homosexuality in schools

(ENS) Archbishop of Canterbury George L. Carey has publicly opposed attempts by Britain's Labor government to scrap a ban on local authorities promoting homosexuality or teaching that it is acceptable as a "pretended family relationship" in schools.

Prime Minister Tony Blair told the House of Commons that a repeal would "free schoolteachers and others to be able to explain to children properly the facts of life."

In a sermon at an inter-denominational service, Carey spelled out his opposition. "I condemn totally prejudice against anyone on the basis of sexual orientation. But I also resist placing homosexual relationships on an equal footing with marriage as the proper context for sexual intimacy," he said. Roman Catholic Cardinal Thomas Winning of Scotland joined Carey in opposition, stirring controversy when he called homosexuality a perversion and compared the threats from the homosexual lobby in Europe to the Nazi bombing of Britain during World War Two. "In place of the bombs 50 years ago you find yourselves bombarded with images, values and ideas that are utterly alien," he said. Carey called for "adequate safeguards" in schools against what critics are calling homosexual propaganda.

Bishop Shaw goes to Washington

(ENS) In February, Bishop M. Thomas Shaw of Massachusetts will go boldly where no other sitting bishop has gone before—to a month-long stint as a congressional intern.

Saying that he wants "to discover something of what the role of the church should be in public life," Shaw will join the corps of college students who make up the majority of interns eager to get an insider's look at the nation's Capitol. He will work in the office of Rep. Amo Houghton, a New York Republican, who told *The Boston Globe* that he plans a full schedule for Shaw.

Houghton said he was trying to arrange for Shaw to spend time with White House officials and Cabinet members, as well as Rep. John Lewis, a Georgia Democrat who is a noted civil rights advocate, and Rep. Tom Lantos, a California Democrat who is a Holocaust survivor. Houghton also said he would take Shaw with him on a visit to his home district to see how a member of Congress interacts with his constituents and later take the bishop to a Renaissance Weekend gathering of opinion-makers in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

According to the *Globe*, Shaw chose Houghton's office because the two have been friends for about 15 years, since Houghton attended a retreat at the Cambridge monastery where Shaw lives. Shaw performed the marriage ceremony for Houghton and his wife, Priscilla Dewey Houghton.

Shaw, a member of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, has declared that he will wear his monastic robe at least part of the time during his internship.

He has taken a one-month leave from his diocesan duties. While he is in Washington, Suffragan Bishop Barbara Harris will administer the diocese.

NEAC will celebrate the past, build the future

(ENS) The National Episcopal AIDS Coalition (NEAC) will host its first conference in five years in San Francisco, California, March 23 to 25 at Grace Cathedral.

The three workshops offered address Social Justice, Spirituality and Prevention and Education. Health care workers, community resource people, persons living with HIV/AIDS, care-givers and loved ones are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to connect and network.

The conference will celebrate personal and parish ministries, particularly at the awards luncheon where the occasional NEAC awards will be announced and Pamela Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, will be recognized for her on going commitment to supporting those whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

Featured speakers will include Gwen Hall, of the Sojourner Truth, Unity Fellowship, Seattle; Christian de la Huerte, San Francisco, author of *Coming Out Spiritually*, and NEAC past-president Jesse Milan, Jr., Bishop William Swing of California will officiate at the opening and the Very Rev. Alan Jones, dean of Grace Cathedral, will officiate at the closing.

For more information contact Cricket Park, conference coordinator, at 614/527-7275 or CBPark@aol.com. Web site: www.neac.org

Millennium Dome anticipates 30,000 visitors per day

(ENS) The Millennium Dome in Greenwich, South London, is open to the public and ready to receive the anticipated 30,000 visitors a day of all faith traditions as well as those with none.

According to a release, the company that operates the dome worked with various churches to appoint a team of 20 Christian chaplains, two of whom will be on duty whenever the Dome is open to the public. The chaplains were drawn from a very broad range of church life, both clergy and lay, including Anglicans, Salvation Army officers, Roman Catholics, and five London City Mission staff.

The chaplains will not only lead prayers twice a day and Sunday worship, but they will also be available to and answer any questions that arise from staff and visitors.

The dome's Prayer Space is open for private prayer and reflection. Morning and afternoon prayers will follow a simple pattern based on a psalm, scripture reading and intercessions, with more extended worship on Sundays.

Anglicare helps East Timor refugees

(Brisbane Focus) Anglicare Top End, the welfare arm of the Anglican Church of Australia, has played a leading role in coordinating the Northern Territory's disaster response to the unexpected numbers of refugees flooding into Darwin from East Timor. Anglicare Top End has helped with the distribution of clothing and personal items.

An urgent appeal for cash, clothing, and toiletries was issued after the most needy people were flown out of East Timor as violence spread following the referendum on independence from Indonesia.

"The organization is very pleased to have the assistance and support of many churches and other organizations in Darwin," said Anglicare Top End director, Peter Fisher. Churches throughout Australia have helped with donations of money and goods as unprecedented numbers of refugees arrive in the country. Armed forces personnel were encouraged to write to their home churches asking for boxes of tinned food, second-hand clothes and toys to be sent to East Timor.

Seven Anglican chaplains helped the Australian Defense Force soldiers to celebrate Christmas in the former Portuguese colony. They are serving as part of the International Force East Timor (Interfet). East Timor has featured strongly in prayers and special services throughout Australia, including an ecumenical prayer service in St Francis Xavier Cathedral in South Australia.

100,000 people mourn loss of church leader in southern India

(ENI)--More than 100 000 people, from a wide range of Christian confessions, attended the funeral on January 13 of Metropolitan Alexander Mar Thoma, a highly respected and loved church leader who was head of the (Orthodox) Mar Thoma Syrian church for almost a quarter of a century.

The Mar Thoma Syrian church is one of the few churches in full communion with the Episcopal Church.

According to church officials, thousands of people paid their respects to Thoma whose funeral was held at St. Thomas Cathedral, in Tiruvalla, India. Also in attendance were the nine bishops of the Mar Thoma church, Orthodox and Roman Catholic bishops and leading officials in the Kerala state government.

He lead the church from 1976 to October 1999 and became the first Metropolitan of the church, which broke away from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian church in 1836.

Metropolitan Mar Chrysostam, his successor, said, "The number of people who turned up for the funeral shows the Valia Metropolitan's legacy. He cared not only for our people but also for the sick, poor and lonely of other denominations and communities."

He also pointed out that the metropolitan had initiated welfare projects for the benefit of the general public. A whole village in the state of Maharashtra in western India had been adopted by the Mar Thoma church after an earthquake in 1994 that killed 10,000 people and left thousands homeless.

In a message to the church, Jeanne Becher of the World Council of Churches (WCC), wrote on behalf of the general secretary, Konrad Raiser, that Metropolitan Alexander's "contribution to the spiritual life of the church and his concern for the marginalized and the poor, regardless of caste and communal distinctions, will remain a beacon for those who follow."

Some churches share in opening of Jubilee door in Rome

(ENI) For the first time in history representatives of the Anglican and Orthodox churches have participated in a key ceremony in Rome marking an official Catholic Jubilee year.

The year 2000 has been designated by the Vatican as a Jubilee Year, a time of special importance for Catholics that includes the granting of special indulgences—remission of the penalty for sin to be served in Purgatory after death. The jubilee, or Holy Year as it is sometimes known, is celebrated once every 25 years.

Representatives of 22 of the world's major churches, and of the World Council of Churches, attended the ceremony. Many commentators stressed that such widespread participation in an event in Rome was unprecedented.

Dr. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Metropolitan Athanasios of Helioupolis and Theira, representing Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople, were also in attendance.

Together with Pope John Paul II, the two leaders pushed open the "holy door" of St Paul's Basilica. Never before, in the 700 years since Rome began celebrating jubilee years, has this event been shared in this way with non-Catholic churches.

In another major gesture to church unity, the service that followed included readings from the works of a Russian Orthodox theologian, George Florovsky, and from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and theologian hanged by the Gestapo in 1945.

In the sermon that followed, Pope John Paul asked: "How is it possible that, despite their fundamental unity in their baptism in Christ, Christians are so divided?" He ended his homily with the words: "Dear brothers and sisters, my wish in this solemn moment is that this year of grace, 2000, become for all of Christ's disciples an opportunity to give a new boost to ecumenical efforts * I remember that in May 1999 in Bucharest, during a service at which I presided in the presence of Romanian Orthodox Patriarch Teoctist, the people—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—shouted: 'Unity, unity'."

Domenico Tomasetto, president of the Federation of Italian Protestant Churches, told NEV, an Italian Protestant news agency: "Hardly any of the Protestant community in Italy participated in the opening of the 'holy door' of St Paul's Basilica, mindful of the fact that if it is true that Christ is the door to forgiveness, this forgiveness is open to us every day. The time of forgiveness is not controlled by any church authority, but is at the heart of the Gospel which is never closed to us."

Religion provides little guidance on gay marriage

(ENS) When faced with large moral questions, many people turn to their religious faith for guidance. But when it comes to gay marriage, they may have to look elsewhere because there's no definitive answer.

According to a report, Vermont's top religious leaders, relying largely on the same basic faiths and traditions, come to opposite conclusions on whether the state should bless marriage by couples of the same gender.

"I think everybody has to look into their own heart and decide what the scriptures or their belief is telling them," said Jane Garrett, an Episcopal priest who has been active in her church's debate about whether to bless unions between gay and lesbian couples.

"It's open to interpretation," she said. "People in the end have to go and look to see what makes sense to them."

Roman Catholic Bishop Kenneth Angell has drafted a pastoral letter opposing same-gender marriage that will be read in all parishes.

"I think there are two ways in which we believe we can know what Christ wants of us," Angell said. "One is through scripture, the revealed word. The other is tradition, with a capital T."

"It just seems with so many people today, in this modern age, everyone wants to be their own teacher," he said. "Whatever we think, we espouse; whatever we want, we do. There doesn't seem to be any logic that I can see that would foster homosexual marriage."

Bishop Mary Adelia McLeod of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, United Methodist Bishop Susan M. Morrison and Ohavi Zedek Rabbi Joshua Chasan signed a separate letter signed by 14 of their colleagues endorsing gay marriage.

In an individual statement McLeod said, "I applaud and am encouraged by the Vermont Supreme Court's ruling that the State of Vermont must 'extend to same-sex couples the common benefits and protections that flow from marriage under Vermont law.'"

"We today no more turn our rebellious children over to the state to be stoned, as it says that we should in Deuteronomy, than we punish severely Jews who violate Shabbat, the Sabbath," Chasan said. "Under Halakhah, you are allowed to make changes when the needs of the majority of the people require them. ... All of our faith traditions accord a large measure of respect for conscience."

He said religion, or at least religious leaders, can be fallible, especially when they "project their values onto God.

"I think that members of the religious community who are clothing their take on sexuality in God's garb continue to give religion a bad name in the minds of those who are very aware of the injustices that have been done by religious folk in God's name.

"I have a very personal understanding of God. I live a traditional Jewish life and I know in my heart of hearts that homosexuality is as righteous as heterosexuality," Chasan said. "I'd be an utter fraud, especially after the Supreme Court decision, if I didn't make plain my view that to deny the right of marriage to homosexuals is a sin."

First worship held at Russia's cathedral since 1931

(ENS) Russia's acting president, Vladimir Putin, joined worshipers on January 16 for the first major service held in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, where reconstruction is nearly complete.

The cathedral in Moscow was blown up by Stalin in 1931 and the site has been a public swimming pool since the 1960s. A report states that its reconstruction over the past five years is seen by many as a symbol of religious revival in post-Communist Russia. It dominates the skyline of central Moscow.

Putin, who became Russia's acting president after President Boris Yeltsin's sudden resignation on December 31, received the blessing of Patriarch Alexy II, patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, at the cathedral.

Many of the worshipers in attendance were construction workers and artists who had worked to rebuild the cathedral and paint its interior with murals. More than 400 artists worked for months, sometimes without pay, to finish most of the work by Christmas.

According to the Russian press, officially, no public money has been spent to rebuild the cathedral but the Moscow city government led by the city's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov,

devised a system, in which businesses were urged to donate money and materials for the construction.

The cost of reconstruction was originally estimated at \$150 million, but officials said it has reached \$500 million.

Arctic's bishop looks to England for priests to brave the cold

(ENI) Unable to find priests in Canada to minister in his region, Bishop Chris Williams of the Anglican Diocese of the Arctic has advertised in England for clergy to fill nine vacancies in the Anglican Communion's largest diocesan territory.

In an article, Williams said he had advertised in the Anglican Church of Canada's national newspaper, the *Anglican Journal*, but to no avail.

The weather and isolation seemed to discourage Canadian candidates who appeared to prefer urban ministry in the south of Canada, the bishop said. "Our communities are isolated from each other. [For] the majority of them, the only way in or out is by air. So for a large part of the time they are working in isolation."

However, he added that the isolation was not as severe as it once was. When Williams first came to the Arctic 40 years ago as a newly ordained priest, a supply ship arrived with mail only once a year.

Now, he said, parishes were serviced two or three times a week.

A more serious challenge to ministry in the Arctic is a range of serious social problems, such as teenage suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse. Williams told the *Anglican Journal*: "There are different strains and stress on clergy. The stress is probably greater these days.

"A former clergyman of this diocese, who is retired in Britain, suggested we put an advert in the British papers," Williams said. "Sixteen people responded, expressing an interest and requesting further information. At the present time two have applied to work here."

The advertisements appeared in various publications and resulted in unexpected interest by the British media. "I have done a number of interviews with the BBC," Williams explained. "I have spoken to a number of newspapers, and some are anxious to do a follow-up story when someone is chosen.

"A film company has even expressed an interest in making a documentary."

Williams added, "The Arctic is the largest Anglican diocese in the world in terms of area—give or take four million square kilometers, one third of the land area of Canada. The diocese consists of what is now the Northwest Territories, plus the new [Inuit] territory of Nunavut and what is known as Nunavik—the Inuit part of Northern Quebec.

"There are 51 congregations in the diocese, with 30 of them traditionally having full-time clergy. The rest of them have been ministered to by a priest resident in a nearby community. But all of the congregations have very strong lay leadership," he said.

After the candidates' references have been checked, Williams said, "we will arrange some kind of interview process for them, possibly in early February."

Archbishop of Canterbury's book distributed free of charge

(**Lambeth Palace**) Four million copies of the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey's book *Jesus 2000* were distributed free of charge.

A report stated that Carey's millennium message was included in the January 2 edition of the *News of the World*, the UK's largest selling Sunday newspaper.

Reportedly the idea for the give-away came from Carey, who wrote to Rupert Murdoch in early November 1999. Murdoch, who is chief executive of News Corporation, which owns the *News of the World*, was enthusiastic about the project and agreed that his company would meet the entire cost of this venture.

"The millennium is a wonderful opportunity to spread understanding and appreciation of the message and the person of Jesus Christ," Carey said. "That is the aim of my book and I'm delighted that it is being supported in this remarkable and generous manner."

Diocese to launch local television ad campaign

(**ENS**) Caught in too typical a traffic snarl, the driver clenches the steering wheel and utters an expletive in vain. The voice-over responds: "You say his name often enough in traffic why not say it where it makes a difference?"

This is just one of 12 television spots that are part of the *Via Media Project*, a \$300,000 six-week advertising campaign to be launched by the Diocese of California beginning in Holy Week.

"We are trying to reach the unchurched, and seekers in the Bay Area," said the Rev. Mark Stanley, rector of Christ Church in Sausalito, who chairs the campaign's committee. "These ads are not meant to speak to people who are already in our church. They are meant to raise the name recognition of the Episcopal Church."

Another ad shows a leather Bible on a table. As the camera reveals a sanctuary and stained glass windows, a voice asks, "Will you come back to church if we promise not to throw the book at you?"

Demonstrating that such ads are effective, Stanley cited a follow-up poll in the Diocese of San Diego that showed openness to attending the Episcopal Church jumped from 2.2 percent to 15.6 percent after the ads were run. In all of the 12 different circumstances, the tag line is "The Episcopal Church welcomes you."

Based on print ads created by the Church Ad Project in Minnesota, the 15-second television spots were created by Rick Johnson, Grace Cathedral's canon for communications, an Emmy award-winning producer and founder of GraceCom.

"The ads are only the beginning," said Stanley. "The key to success is how the congregations are prepared to welcome newcomers."

NCC trying to help with the Elian Gonzalez situation

(**NCC**) As the controversy surrounding Elian Gonzalez, the six-year-old Cuban boy fished out of the waters off Florida on Thanksgiving Day after his mother and stepfather drowned continues, the National Council of Churches (NCC) is aggressively seeking a way to ease his return to his family in Cuba.

The NCC, at the request of and in close consultation with the Cuban Council of Churches, has been working on this case since early December. But what began quietly became public when Gonzalez' return home continued to be met with delays.

NCC representatives traveled to Cuba in early January to meet with his father and other close family members and reaffirmed their humanitarian concern that Gonzalez be reunited quickly with his family. The INS affirmed the father's right to custody and ordered Gonzalez's return home by January 14, but relatives in Miami, Florida, are fighting the order. This further delay led to his grandmothers' decision to bring their plea for his return to the U.S. in person.

"We facilitated the grandmothers' visit to the United States so that Americans could hear firsthand their love for their grandson and their fervent desire to take him back home with them to his father, grandparents, great-grandmother and extended family in Cardenas, Cuba," said the Rev. Robert W. Edgar, the NCC's general secretary. "That mission was accomplished as they witnessed eloquently to their love for their 'little heart' and their suffering because of his absence."



news features

2000-017

Statement of the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies

Upon our recommendation, the Executive Council today voted unanimously to make an important change in some of its arrangements for the holding of the General Convention in Denver this July. The Church had intended to hold many of its hearings, meetings and events in the Adams Mark hotel facilities and had also reserved a large block of guestrooms at that hotel. Recent events involving that hotel chain have caused us to recommend that the Church not use those facilities and guestrooms. We intend to inform the hotel accordingly.

We were disturbed to learn just prior to Christmas that the United States Department of Justice had filed suit against the hotel chain in federal court in Florida alleging a broad pattern of racial discrimination in providing a variety of guest services. Subsequent discussion with hotel officials both in Denver and corporate headquarters in St. Louis, coupled with reports by diocese of Colorado representatives of discussions with local community and church leaders in Denver, failed to allay our concerns. The Church is obviously not in a position to assess the merit of the discrimination suit against the hotel chain. Nevertheless, the allegations of the Justice Department and other reports from local leaders citing similar problems with the Adams Mark in Denver led us to recommend to the Council that the Church not go forward with the planned arrangements to use any of the facilities of that hotel at the Denver convention.

As stated, the Council unanimously agreed that this action was the most appropriate response to the circumstances in light of the Church's profound commitment to eradicating racism in our Church and society.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold
Presiding Bishop and Primate

Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis
President, House of Deputies

January 17, 2000

2000-026

One woman's Mideast peace ministry becomes a coast-to-coast initiative

by Kathryn McCormick

(ENS) As the wife of a U.S. diplomat, Jerri Bird has lived in places throughout the Mideast where the tensions of war or near-war permeated every part of daily life. It was hard to live with. While the culture at each post was wonderful to discover and learn about, and the people often were fascinating, Bird says she realized that often what she and they shared was a common yearning for peace.

But what started as a yearning has now become a nearly full-time crusade to help Americans understand issues surrounding the long pursuit of peace in troubled parts of the world. The best understanding, she figured, would come from women who could describe their own experiences coping with the war actions of men.

Although she and her husband, Gene, retired several years ago to a home in Washington, D.C., she now runs a small organization, Partners for Peace, that has sponsored several extensive tours by women from Israel—Palestinians and Jews—throughout the United States. Not only do the tour members lecture and answer questions about their lives in a tension-filled state, Bird makes sure they also speak with newspapers, magazines and television and radio stations along the way.

A three-woman tour

Bird, an Episcopalian who admits to being over 70 years old, says the work is exhausting yet exhilarating. The first tour, "Jerusalem Women Speak: Three Women, Three Faiths, One Shared City," was launched in January 1998. It covered 10 cities in 17 days.

"These women didn't know each other, and didn't come with agendas," Bird recalled. "They talked about their personal experiences and their own views." The tour proved so successful—attendance at lectures and the combined audiences of the media involved reached a total of 220 million people, she said—that two other tours have been conducted since then.

The most recent was last fall, when Allegra Pacheco and Sahar Francis, human rights lawyers in Israel and the Occupied Territories, discussed the Israeli High Court's acknowledgement that the Israeli security force had routinely tortured detainees during interrogations. The detainees are persons who are held without charge on suspicion of security offenses. The overwhelming majority are Palestinians.

The court's landmark ruling declared that the use of such force was illegal.

Pacheco, a Jewish American-born graduate of Columbia Law School who now holds dual citizenship in Israel and the U.S., argued the court case on behalf of detainees who had been tortured; Francis, a Christian Palestinian Israeli, a graduate of Haifa University, has worked extensively with the primarily Palestinian detainees and their traumatized families.

Together they talked about the Israeli court decision and what life is like in a volatile part of the world where peace is elusive.

First post in Jerusalem

Jerri Bird's experience in the Mideast began when she and her husband arrived in Jerusalem in 1956. He was a vice-consul in the U.S. Foreign Service.

"I think it's still my favorite post, although it was a very strange existence," says Bird, describing how the divided city forced her and her husband to cross a line between very different worlds in order to attend parties or to meet friends.

Subsequent assignments took them and their growing family to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and India. The couple has four children. When Gene Bird retired from the Foreign Service in 1975 the couple returned to the United States—but not for long, Bird says, recalling that her husband accepted a business assignment in Saudi Arabia, so they returned to the Mideast for four more years.

They were years that she particularly enjoyed, she says. "The kids were grown and I found I had some time on my hands."

She became increasingly disturbed by what she saw as misinformation that distorted Americans' understanding of the Saudis, particularly Saudi women. She conducted detailed interviews with 30 to 40 Saudi women, asking them about family life, their roles as women in Saudi society, how much independence they had, and even about their sex lives. The results are in a manuscript awaiting publication.

"No one has written such a book yet," Bird declares.

After the assignment in Saudi Arabia, the couple settled in Washington, D.C., where they became active in working for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Bird was a member of the Diocese of Washington's Peace Commission but left in order to pursue what she determined was a more active course toward Mideast peace.

Humble beginning

Partners for Peace was born at her dining room table, an outgrowth of work done by a group that met in the Birds' home and discussed ways to develop grassroots contacts.

"We decided after a while that our effort needed better public relations," Bird says. "Too many people weren't getting our message."

She hired Peter Wirth, a public relations expert who had worked with Witness for Peace.

Wirth smiles at the notion of being "hired" for his job at Partners for Peace. His modest pay comes from the private contributions made to Partners, as well as several small grants the group has received in recent years. Bird says the group now raises about \$70,000 per year—enough for the extensive traveling involved and to allow it to currently have an intern from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

With Bird, Wirth has concentrated on taking the tours to places where people might not often discuss foreign policy. The most recent tour, featuring the human right lawyers, visited many law schools, but also included the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York and other stops. Previous tours have included a number of women's groups—Arab, Jewish and Christian—as well as interfaith groups.

The Birds are members of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Washington.

Jerri Bird says that she was born to a family rooted in the United Church of Christ, but when she and her husband went overseas, and particularly as their children were growing, they longed for a way to develop a consistency in their church-going. They became Episcopalians during their first time in Saudi Arabia.

Her faith is "just basic" to her life, she says. "I was taught from a very early age that I had to give back, I had obligations to the greater society. What I have was given to me in trust."

She is proud that all of her kids seem to have learned this lesson. "They're all very concerned human beings," she says.

--Kathryn McCormick is associate director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

Photographs included in this issue of ENS:

1. Presiding bishop continues his conversation with the church during January teleconference (2000-020)
2. Presiding bishop continues his conversation with the church during January teleconference (2000-020)
3. Presiding Bishop's teleconference spotlights ministries of the Episcopal Church (2000-020)

(All photos are available in color)

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